

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE **28**

TIME
19 August 1985

World

FRANCE

Uncovering a French Connection

A secret service is accused of terrorist activities

Who bombed the *Rainbow Warrior*? That has been the puzzling question ever since two explosions blew a hole in the hull of the 130-ft. converted trawler as it lay anchored in the harbor at Auckland, New Zealand, on July 10. A crew member was killed in the blast. The flagship of Greenpeace, the environmental group that opposes nuclear testing and the killing of whales, the vessel was due to lead a flotilla of ships into the waters around Mururoa Atoll, 700 miles southeast of Tahiti, to protest French atomic tests in the area. As the *Rainbow Warrior* lay prow up in the harbor, New Zealand Prime Minister David Lange, himself a vocal opponent of nuclear testing, deplored the incident as "a major criminal act with terrorist overtones."

Last week two French magazines accused the terrorists of being French government agents. *VSD* and *L'Événement du Jeudi* charged that agents of the Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DGSE), France's CIA, had arranged the sabotage of the Greenpeace vessel. The accusation brought an immediate response from President François Mitterrand, who dispatched a letter to Lange. "The information that has been sent to us leads us to think that a link may exist between the French service and two persons implicated by New Zealand authorities in the affair of the *Rainbow Warrior*," he wrote. Mitterrand then appointed Bernard Tricot, a highly respected former aide to Charles de Gaulle, to lead "a rigorous investigation" into the French government's alleged involvement, and he ordered all government ministries to cooperate fully. Declared the President: "If responsibility is proved, the guilty, at whatever level they find themselves, should be severely punished." The French intelligence agency denied official involvement in the attack, but other government insiders speculate that a maverick faction could have acted without high-level approval.

Clues pointing to French involvement were not hard to find. The bombing seemed to have been organized with all the bumbling finesse of an Inspector Clouseau rather than the cool efficiency of a John le Carré operative. Following the explosion, New Zealand investigators discovered a distinctive gray-and-black dinghy floating in the harbor near the wreck of the trawler. The dinghy, they found, was of a type not sold in New Zealand, though it is commonly used by the French navy. Oxygen tanks used by divers that were washed up on a nearby beach also bore French registration marks. "Why didn't they leave behind a Basque beret, a loaf of bread and a bottle of Beaujolais?" one DGSE spokesman asked.

But the most damaging evidence came from the Greenpeace employees. They reported seeing a van pick up a diver near the dock a few hours before the explosions. The vehicle was traced to Alain-Jacques and Sophie-Claire Turenge, a French-speaking couple who claimed to be on their honeymoon. But a passport check revealed that the couple's Swiss papers were false. *VSD*, which has a reputation for political muckraking, reported that Sophie-Claire was actually a captain in the French secret service. The Turenge have been charged in New Zealand with murder, arson and conspiracy.

Less progress has been made in discovering what may have motivated the attack. The two magazines speculated that agents wanted to prevent the *Rainbow Warrior's* antinuclear mission, but that hardly seemed a satisfactory explanation. Greenpeace has been protesting French tests in the area for years. "It's a common occurrence," said one French government official. "They sail to the boundary of our test area. A French naval vessel tells them they can't go further. They scream and complain and that's it."